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ABSTRACT

In order to make the vast literature about the history of Indian and white relations in New York readily accessible to teachers, students, and general readers, this booklet brings together the main points of the relationship between the Indians and Sir William Johnson. Johnson is a key figure in the Indian story of New York state during the 1770s. The topics covered in this document are Indians of New York, coming of the white men, management of Indian affairs, William Johnson comes to America, the Indian trade, French and Indian War, Battle of Lake George, Sir William Johnson, the close of the war, taking Fort Niagara, Sir William--colonial statesman, culture on the frontier, life at Johnson Hall, failure of Indian management, American independence, Indians and the Revolution, and importance of Sir William Johnson. Both the white man's and the Indian's views on major events are incorporated into the booklet. (Author/ND)

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Sir William Johnson and the Indians of New York

by Milton W. Hamilton

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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New York ... Bicentennial ...

Sir William Johnson and the Indians of New York

by
MILTON W. HAMILTON

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
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New York State
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00003

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00004

Foreword

The relations of white settlers and Indians during New York's colonial period have a fascinating attraction for teachers, students, and general readers. Sometimes peaceful, but often warlike, this relationship encompasses cultural history, wars, international diplomacy, and economic affairs. For the individual Indian and white settler, success or failure in these matters could be the difference between life and death, or prosperity and economic failure. How Indians and whites worked together also had a bearing on international events during the century that Great Britain and France fought the great wars for empire with most of North America as the winner's prize. During the final conflict, the French and Indian War from 1756 to 1763, the Indians were a key part of both the French and British plans.

There is a vast literature dealing with Indian and white relations, but little of it is readily and easily accessible to teachers, students, and general readers. To bring together the main points of this exciting and vivid history, Dr. Milton W. Hamilton has written this booklet on Sir William Johnson and the Indians. As trader, Indian agent, soldier, and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, Johnson was a key figure in the Indian story. He is as important for his great work during the momentous events of the 18th century as for his ability to understand the Indians and to work well with them. His success in this dual role is unique in New York history.

To tell this significant story of Johnson and the Indians, Dr. Hamilton drew extensively on the 13 volumes of the *Sir William Johnson Papers*, 5 of which he edited before retiring from the State Education Department as senior historian in 1965. All of the other relevant sources have been consulted. These materials have been used to present both the white man's and the Indian's views on major events. Long quotations from the sources are included to help the reader understand and appreciate the life and times of the 18th century. A select bibliography includes suggestions for further reading.

Readers of this booklet may wish to visit some of the historic sites associated with the Johnson story. Johnson Hall, at Johnstown, N. Y., has been beautifully restored by New York State. Guy Park at Amsterdam is also administered by the State. Fort Johnson, a mile west of Guy Park, is the home of the Montgomery County Historical Society. The Tryon County Courthouse in Johnstown serves as the Fulton County Courthouse. Indian Castle Church, near Fort Plain, is preserved by an association chartered by the Board of Regents.

00005

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LOUIS LEONARD TUCKER
Assistant Commissioner for
State History

00006

Contents

	Page
Foreword	iii
Introduction	1
Indians of New York	2
Coming of the White Men	3
Management of Indian Affairs	5
William Johnson Comes to America	7
The Indian Trade	10
French and Indian War	12
Battle of Lake George	15
Sir William Johnson	19
The Close of the War	21
Taking Fort Niagara	23
Sir William — Colonial Statesman	26
Culture on the Frontier	32
Life at Johnson Hall	34
Failure of Indian Management	36
American Independence	40
Indians and the Revolution	41
Importance of Sir William Johnson	45
Sources	46

00007

Illustrations

PAGE

Hendrick and Sir William Johnson ....Cover
From a photograph of the monument at Lake George Battlefield Park. Courtesy of S. Burt McCormac III, Warren County Bicentennial Commission.

Sir William Johnson vii
Painting by John Wollaston, Jr. Courtesy of Albany Institute of History and Art

Battle of Lake George 17
Contemporary sketch by Samuel Blodget. From *Documentary History of New York*, vol. IV, p.256

Sir John Johnson 18
Pastel by St. Memin. Johnson Hall, New York State Historic Site, Johnstown, N.Y.

Sir William Johnson 27
Painting attributed to Thomas McIlworth. Courtesy of New York Historical Society, New York City

Map of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, 1768..... 30
Drawn by Guy Johnson. From *Johnson Papers*, vol. VI, p. 450

Colonel Guy Johnson 39
Painting by Benjamin West. Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Joseph Brant 44
Painting by Gilbert Stuart. Courtesy of New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, N.Y.

00008

Introduction

"Indian Affairs" today are a relatively minor concern of our State and national governments. While the numbers of Indians involved—some 400,000 in the nation, and 7,000 on reservations in New York—are considerable, they are small in relation to our total population. The organized groups of Indians get public attention periodically when their national or tribal rights are threatened; but, as in cases of the St. Lawrence Seaway or power projects, they are dealt with as minorities.

In the colonial period of the 17th and 18th centuries, however, Indian affairs were a major concern. The number of Indians in New York was approximately the same as now, but, since the settlers were few, they were relatively large in importance. Relations with the Indians were an important function of government; upon their successful management depended the growth and prosperity of the colony, while failure in this field could bring death and destruction to civilized communities. A statesman who knew how to handle the Indians was of the greatest value.

When the white man first came to these shores and sailed the rivers and lakes, he encountered Indians (so-called because the first Spanish explorers believed they were in the East Indies) who were the members of two major native stocks—the Algonkin and the Iroquois. The former, among whom were Indians of Canada and New England, were represented by some tribes of northern New York who were first seen by Champlain, and by the river Indians, or Mahicans, and the Wappingers, who were seen by Henry Hudson. Eventually, more important than these, because of their military strength and organization, were the Iroquois Five (later Six) Nations who occupied the central part of New York. Since Indian relations in colonial New York were primarily with the Iroquois, it will be helpful to have a brief survey of their history.

As the Iroquois were dependent upon hunting and fishing for their livelihood, they ranged over a large area. Their early history was concerned with migrations and the search for hunting grounds, bringing some conflicts with other tribes. When conditions were favorable, they felt secure and made settlements and permanent communities. In such circumstances, they could develop a tribal government. It is because the Iroquois went through this cycle of forming settled villages, developing a government, and occupying definite areas, with an improved culture, that they became the dominant people of the East. Their strategic location in central New York, with access to the great water routes of the interior, the Great Lakes, and the Ohio and Susquehanna Rivers, enabled them to exert influence over the other tribes

00009

Indians of New York

Some time about the year 1300, western and central New York were occupied by the Iroquois tribes or nations who later formed a confederacy. A beautiful legend describes the founding of the League by Deganawidah, the lawgiver, and Hiawatha, the diplomat, who persuaded the warring nations to come together and plant the great tree of peace. They sought out the wicked and vindictive Ododarho, the cause of the tribal dissension, and "Combed the snakes out of his hair." Thereupon the Five Nations united in the "Longhouse" with its council fire at Onondaga, near the present site of Syracuse. The great White Pine was the symbol of their peace, and the "Longhouse," the council of chiefs or sachems, was their governing body. The Confederacy was known as the Five Nations. These nations were the Mohawks or "Keepers of the Eastern Door," the Oneidas or "People of the Stone," the Onondagas or "Hill People," the Cayugas or "Swamp People," and the Senecas, the "Keepers of the Western Door." When the Dutch and English arrived, the Mohawks were located about 50 miles west of Albany; the Senecas were as far to the west as Batavia, and they began to extend their influence north and south. Although the Iroquois later obtained a reputation as warriors and conquerors, they were peaceful during their earlier history.

The common picture of the American Indian, the tribesmen of the plains living in tepees and hunting buffalo, does not describe these Iroquois. Neither did they wear the elaborate feathered headdress of the western Indians. Instead they lived in villages named "Castles" by the white men which were sometimes fortified (palisaded) strongholds. Their habitations were rectangular "longhouses" of bark and saplings. They cultivated fields of corn and were good farmers. Through the longhouse with its central council fire at Onondaga the Confederacy evolved a government which enabled them to act in concert. They did not always agree, and there was room for talk and diplomacy among the sachems, but they achieved a measure of harmony unusual among primitive people. They had a well-understood system of laws and representation, which sometimes appears wiser than those of the white men. Socially, the Iroquois were a matriarchy, for inheritance was in the female line. The women of the tribe had great influence in their councils. Although the Iroquois achieved a reputation as intrepid fighters and conquerors of other tribes, the society was peaceful; they became hostile only when driven to war over trade or hunting grounds.

00010

Coming of the White Men

Henry Hudson sailing along the Atlantic coast in 1609 found some Indians friendly and desirous of cordial relations; others, perhaps through misunderstandings, provoked conflict, or feeling themselves wronged, became hostile. Samuel de Champlain in the same year made friends with the Algonkin Indians along the St. Lawrence, who then sought his aid against the Iroquois.

In a skirmish between these foes, he used his guns with fateful consequences. This action did not forever decide that Iroquois should hate Frenchmen (in fact they collaborated to a great extent later), but it began an unfortunate practice of white men meddling in the Indians' wars and then enlisting Indians to fight for them.

The Dutch who by 1624 had made permanent settlements in New Netherland were primarily interested in trade. The colony was under the control of the Dutch West India Company whose directors at their offices in Amsterdam beheld the venture as successful only if trade flourished. Settlement was promoted by a system of patroonships which were granted to directors of the company. To the company, the natives were useful only if they provided furs and other goods for barter. They saw little hope in civilizing or Christianizing the Indians. If the Dutch traders had been friendlier and more charitable toward the Indians, they might have lived as neighbors in peace. But there were greedy and ruthless men among these settlers, contemptuous of the Indians and their way of life, who were bound to provoke trouble. Thefts, murders, and reprisals bred clashes and minor wars. A bellicose Governor Kieft tried to end the Indian menace by extermination, but only made matters worse. It required the strong rule of the dictatorial Peter Stuyvesant to rescue the Dutch colony from its errors, lethargy, and unwise Indian policy. He did not succeed in preserving the colony, which he was compelled to surrender to the English in 1664, but he did make peace with the Indians.

Following the explorations of Cartier and Champlain, the French established posts along the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes to exploit the fur trade. Venturesome coureurs de bois, or wood rangers, lived and traded with Indians, often intermarrying and raising halfbreed children. After them came Catholic missionaries, Recollect friars and Jesuits, who worked to convert Indians to Christianity. Some penetrated south into New York as far as the Mohawk and Onondaga castles where they made converts among the Iroquois. Later, when the Iroquois became hostile to the French, some missionaries were tortured and suffered martyrdom.

00011

The fur trade was largely responsible for the Iroquois hostility towards the French. After 1640, beavers were so scarce in central New York that the Iroquois had to deal with western tribes to obtain enough for trade. Of these tribes, the Hurons, living north of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario, were the most successful traders and suppliers of furs. But they were easily reached by the French who sought to monopolize the trade and shut out the Five Nations. At times the Iroquois were tempted to raid the canoe fleets carrying the year's furs down the Ottawa River to the St. Lawrence, and thus began a struggle between the two groups of Indians. The French, profiting from the Huron trade, sought to keep them at odds with the Iroquois who would carry the furs southward. Hence the Five Nations began a war on the French, struck down the French Jesuit missionary Father Jogues, who was then among them, and attacked the Hurons.

In spite of efforts to make peace, the Iroquois in 1649 penetrated far into Huronia, destroyed the Huron towns and so thoroughly ravaged their settlements that they ceased to be a powerful tribe. The Five Nations were now free to obtain furs from the various western tribes. This was not always easy, however, for there were other rival tribes hemming in the Iroquois. Their old enemies the Mahicans were finally defeated, and then there was a long drawn-out struggle with the Susquehannas of Pennsylvania.

Supported by the colonies of Maryland and Delaware, from whom they obtained arms, these people raided far into the lands of the Senecas, and even forced some to flee across Lake Ontario. When the whites of these provinces clashed with the Susquehannas, however, the Senecas were able to retaliate and finally destroy the power of these southern Indians, too. The Delaware Indians, formerly subjects of the Susquehannochs, now became tributary to the Iroquois.

Thus the Indian wars had raised the Five Nations from a peaceful agricultural people to the status of conquerors. They sought to solve their new problems by drawing other tribes closer to the Longhouse. The Delawares and the Nanticokes were resettled along the Susquehanna River, and the Iroquois governed them by means of a "half-king," who was a kind of proconsul. Later, the Tuscaroras were aided in their northward migration from North Carolina, and eventually added to the Five Nations. By 1700, the Iroquois had obtained an empire, or hegemony, over lesser or weaker tribes, which enhanced their importance in dealing with the whites. Yet the "Beaver Wars" had not solved the problem of the fur trade; defeated and dispersed tribes moved further west, thereby requiring longer journeys to bring their pelts to either the French or English.

00012

Management of Indian Affairs

Now that French efforts among the Iroquois had been frustrated, the English, succeeding the Dutch in New York, sought their friendship. In 1683, Governor Thomas Dongan, one of the ablest of the colonial governors, made a treaty with the Iroquois and offered them the protection of the English king. The king's arms were erected in the Castles of the Five Nations, but the Indians called themselves "brethren," not subjects. The English hoped to extend their influence over all the lands under Iroquois rule. Although a Catholic, appointed by Catholic James II, Dongan recognized that Jesuit missionaries were agents of French aggression and opposed their missions in New York. He even suggested that English Jesuits might be sent over.

In 1689, war broke out between France and England, "King William's War" it was called in America, and was reflected along the American frontier by outbreaks of violence and murderous raids in which the Iroquois were the French target. In 1689, the Mohawks moved on Montreal, burned the French settlement at La Chine and massacred its inhabitants. The next year the French and their Indian allies retaliated. They marched south in the dead of winter (February 1690), burned Schenectady and massacred or carried off many of the inhabitants. Albany should have been the objective, but the Dutch merchants there were carrying on a secret fur trade with Montreal, so Albany was spared. A truce in 1701 ended hostilities and permitted this trade to continue.

After the first halting steps of the colonists and their leaders to deal with "the savages," there came a realization that success with the Indians depended upon respect for their leaders, their institutions, and their methods of negotiation. A few wise men won their confidence by treating them as equals, adopting their manner of negotiation and learning to speak their language. Interpreters were employed to translate speeches and help make treaties, but too often they were rude fellows who had acquired the native tongue through long association in hunting and trade, but who had little concept of the needs of the colony or the policies of their leaders. Too often they were unscrupulous self-seekers whom the Indians did not trust.

An exception, during the Dutch period, was Arent Van Curler, known as the founder of Schenectady. A relation of the Van Rensselaers, he was sent out by them in 1638 as a minor official. Later, he took up farming and trade, had many contacts and several official assignments with the Indians. Because of his honesty and sincerity, he won the Indians' respect, and they chose to deal with him instead

00013

of others in the Dutch government. He kept this position under the English until his accidental death in 1667. The Indians called him "Corlaer," which they also applied to successive governors of New York.

Likewise, there appeared under the English governors men of stature and responsibility who won the respect and cooperation of the Indians. Of these, Peter Schuyler (1657-1724) and his brother-in-law, Robert Livingston (1654-1728), were among the most influential. Schuyler became the first mayor of Albany after it received its charter from Governor Dongan in 1686. Not only was Albany the outpost for the fur trade, but its Fort Frederick, on the hill overlooking the settlement, was the chief military center for defense. From here, Schuyler led expeditions of English and Indians against the French and their allies. Successive royal governors employed Schuyler to keep the Indians friendly, and they returned the good faith and trust of the man whom they called "Quider."

In 1710, in order to solicit more aid and concern for Indian affairs, Peter Schuyler and Colonel Francis Nicholson visited London with four sachems, commonly called "Four Kings," who were presented at the court of Queen Anne. They were lionized and feted. Their portraits were painted in elaborate and colorful costumes. One, "King" Hendrick, became more famous in later years as a leader of the Mohawks and a friend of the English. Another, surnamed Brant, was supposed to have been the grandfather of Joseph Brant of the American Revolution. Their visit caused Queen Anne to promote Anglican missions among the Iroquois, for which she sent Bibles, prayerbooks, and communion plate to her "Chapel of the Mohawks" and "Chapel of the Onondagas."*

Robert Livingston, an ambitious young Scot, who had been exiled to the Netherlands for his political views before coming to New York in 1675, was the next most influential figure in dealing with Indians. With his knowledge of Dutch, he was a useful person in the early days of English rule. First secretary of the Colony (or Manor) of Rensselaerswyck, he also served as Town Clerk of Albany and ex officio secretary of Indian Affairs. From Governor Dongan he received two grants of land on the east bank of the Hudson below Albany which he used for an enlarged claim, later known as Livings-

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* The former was used in Queen Anne's Chapel at Fort Hunter, was carried by the Mohawks to Canada in the Revolution, and is now in the chapel at the reservation in Brantford, Ontario. There was no chapel among the Onondagas in 1710, so that the mission at Albany held the gift, and the silver communion service is now in St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Albany.

00014

ton Manor. Through these and other offices, and by the accumulation of wealth, he became a key public figure, even lending money to governors when necessary for public use. Finding it difficult to collect these advances, he sailed to England in 1696, and there persuaded the ministry to make the Indian secretary of the province a permanent official with an annual salary of £100. Continuing in the office, he assisted at Indian conferences, translating speeches (in Dutch, English, and Indian) and keeping the records which became later the source for Indian claims and the basis of Indian policy. Through these official efforts, and with his many official connections, Livingston had a hand in Indian affairs until his retirement in 1721.

William Johnson Comes to America

In the early 18th century, America was the land of promise for many people of the Old World. Here were vast areas of virgin forest and fertile river valleys, where land could be readily obtained. Men of affairs were taking claims, by any means, and devising schemes for their exploitation.

One such promoter was Captain Peter Warren of Ireland, whose naval exploits won him favor with the crown and connection by marriage with the governor of New York. Of good family at home, he had married Susan De Lancey of New York, and had occupied a farm on Manhattan. Bitten by the speculation bug, he had also acquired extensive acreage in the Mohawk Valley.

It was to manage and develop this land that he sent his young nephew, William Johnson, to the new world.

Christopher Johnson, the father of William, occupied a 200-acre estate called Smithstown, County Meath, some 20 miles from Dublin. Of the country gentry, he had a comfortable home and could provide well for his sons and daughters. William no doubt had a tolerable education, but there were few opportunities in Ireland for a young man of spirit and ambition. There was the army, to which his brother Warren turned, and there was the navy where the patronage of his uncle would help. But Uncle Peter saw a way both to promote the career of his nephew, and, at the same time, to exploit his new world properties. He would charge the young man with the settlement of the Mohawk lands, and stake him for a venture into trade. It was a business rather than a military career for young William.

00015

In the spring of 1738, William Johnson arrived in Boston, bringing with him 12 families to settle as tenants on the land. Also with him for a brief time was his cousin, Michael Tyrrell, who later went into the army. Details are lacking about Johnson's first moves in America, but, by summer of 1738, he was in Albany transporting his people and supplies by wagon to Schenectady; then upriver by hired bateaux, loaded barges propelled by poles. At length, they reached Warrensborough (as his uncle's tract was known), south of the Mohawk River, near the present city of Amsterdam. Here the settlement included Palatine Germans and several Irish families.

Uncle Peter proposed to have him do some trading. The Captain wrote a detailed letter of instructions.

> I am sorry you have been oblidged to draw for more on New York then I directed but as it is I presume for goods that will Bring part of it in Again, I am not displeased with it, but will not go beyond £200p^{r}. annum in making the settlement, and y^{t}. to be complete in 3 years from your first beginning which will make the whole 600. . . .

The articles of the trade were staples, but the great difficulty was in transporting them and making remittances.

> . . . it will answer to send wheat, Corn, Pease, or any of the produce of that Country to this place, and early in the Spring, if you Can Ingage y^{e}. first sloop from Albany to take in what you May have, and order it to be sent Me I will send y^{e}. returns in such goods as you May desire and as for what Skins you Can procure I will send them to London, and y^{e}. produce of them Shall be sent you in proper goods. I have wrote to Dublin for 200 £ster: in Linnen from 8^{d}. to 20 pence pr. yard and to Scotland for 50 £ster: in Check linnen, besides about £200 worth of goods from London.
>
> . . . pray let me know what Rum and all things sells for there such as Axes and other wrought Iron, them I could send from hence, if I found y^{e}. profit great I wou'd soon have a thousand pounds worth of goods there, what wou'd then leather Caps sell for, and what profit had you on the linnen and any of your goods, how can I Judge what is best for you when you dont, particularly tell me the prices only say at large this and y^{t}. sels well you ought to be more Circumspect and particular.

There was much in the way of suggestions for improving the land: the planting of orchards, the use of meadow land, girdling of trees, and marking the lots with hedge rows (as in the old country). He

00016

would send "some Muskets for your House," and "Books for you to keep y^{r}. Accts. which You Must do very regular." Finally there was advice as to his conduct.

> . . . keep well with all Mankind act with honour & honesty both of you. dont be Notional as some of our Country men are often foolishly, and dont say any thing about the Badness of the Patrones (patroon's) Horses, for it may be taken Amiss, he is a near relation of my wifes, and may have it in his power very much to Serve you. . . . My love to Mick live like Brothers, and I will be an Affecte uncle to you Both.
>
> P. Warren

By next spring "Billy," as his aunt and uncle addressed him, was reporting on a great deal of trade. He told how his situation would be "the properest place on the Whole River for a Store house and Shop in the Winter, by reason of all the High Germans passing by that way in the Winter, and all the upper Nations of Indians whose trade is pritty Valuable."

Then he spoke of branching out:

> . . . to a place Called Oquago on the Susquehannah [near Windsor, N. Y.] River, towards Philadelphia, which I intend if y^{u}. think proper to make tryall this fall Wth. abt. £200 worth of Goods W^{n}. I am credibly Informed by those that Came from thence that I Can to better advantage dispose of them to the Indians there, better than at Oswego because there are too many traders go there,

More important for the future was his taking up some land on his own account, although this incurred the displeasure of his uncle. Perhaps the Captain felt that the young man should confine himself to his assigned task, and the trade, but in a new land many prospects beckon.

> I find Y^{u}. are displeased at my purchaseing land, Which in Everry Bodys Opinion is a good Bargain, and Can any time I please Sell it for the Money And More So that I hope, D^{r}. Uncle y^{e}. not continue y^{r}. Opinion when y^{u}. See it and know My Design (w^{h}. is this) to have a Carefull Honest Man there Who will Manage the farm, w^{h}. will at least Clear I am Sure £30 per Annum, Moreover the Chief thing is a fine Creek to build a Saw Mill on, having Loggs Enough at hand, half of w^{h}. Creek belongs to Me, so that I intend after a little time, please God, to build a Mill there, w^{h}, may clear £40 per annum, and that wth out Much trouble, so that the Income of that May Enable me the better to go on in the World, . . .

00017

There was indeed a fine location (in present city of Amsterdam) where he built his first home on his own land in 1739, to be known as Mount Johnson. Here he brought his young wife, Catherine Weisenberg, a runaway Palatine redemptioner, and here were born his son John and his daughters, Ann (or Nancy) and Mary (Polly).

And go on in the world he did. . . .

The Indian Trade

William Johnson had no idea when he came to the New World that his future would be so much influenced by the natives, the Indians of whom he then knew little. Yet his trade along the Mohawk River soon threw him more and more among the tribes. He handled their furs in trade and discovered that many traders were so grossly unfair in their methods that the Indians were often swindled. The traders used rum to tempt the Indians, to get them drunk, and then cheated them or stole their lands. The Indians were fooled by the white man's tricks, but later they realized how they had been treated and nourished a resentment. Sometimes this erupted into violence and savage reprisals.

Now, William Johnson was a trader, too, but he was smart enough to see that while cheating the Indians might make a "fast buck," it would lose their long term good will. Would it not be better to cultivate their trade for a long term by playing fair? Furthermore, William was an honest and openhanded young Irishman who wanted to make friends and who respected the rights of others as he wished them to like and respect him. Unlike many others traders, he thought of the Indians as fellowmen, and he discovered that when they were treated well they made good friends and pleasant companions. Therefore in a short time he had won many friends among the Indians who came to respect him, and eventually to honor him with the title of sachem, meaning a wise man and an adviser in their affairs. When trouble arose, they turned to him and frequently he was able to make peace or to settle disagreements. They said, "He speaks with a straight tongue," and they gave him the name "Warrag'iyagey," meaning "one who does much business."

As indicated above, the beavers were exhausted in New York, and the fur trade had to be carried on with the "far Indians" of the West. The French in Canada through their coureurs de bois (wood rangers) developed an extensive commerce with these western Indians, and

00018

when the English and the Iroquois traded in furs they were competing with the French. In 1720, the French had built a trading post on the Niagara River, the *Magazin Royal;* and, in 1726, they built another post, which became Fort Niagara, where the Niagara River enters Lake Ontario.

These moves alarmed the English in New York, and, in 1727, Governor Burnet built a post at Oswego to serve as a fur trading center and as a strategic point to break the French monopoly of the western fur trade. In fact they called it a "beaver trap," by which they hoped to catch their share of the business. Now, both French and English sent agents among the Indian tribes to win their allegiance. Since the time of Governor Dongan, the English had called themselves protectors of the Iroquois. Likewise the French through their missionaries and traders sought to keep the Iroquois attached to them. When war broke out, as it did in 1745, this rivalry for Indian support became intense. The posts on the frontier became forts and were used for military bases.

In 1746, a conference was held in Albany between the Iroquois Indians and the English colonists who were threatened by the French on the north. New York and Massachusetts sent delegates to parley with the Indians as they had often done before. The Mohawks resented the treatment they had received from the Albany traders, who were also commissioners of Indian affairs, and it was doubtful whether they would come. William Johnson was asked to persuade them, and greatly impressed everyone by his leadership and success.

Cadwallader Colden in his *History of the Five Nations* related how:

> Mr. William Johnson was indefatigable among the Mohawks; he dressed himself after the Indian Manner, made frequent Dances according to their Custom when they excite to War, and used all the Means he could think of . . . in order to engage them heartily in the War against Canada.

On August 8, he led the Mohawks in person, "dressed and painted after the Manner of an Indian War Captain," as they marched down the river to Albany, armed and dressed for war.

After this, Governor Clinton often depended upon William Johnson in his dealings with the Indians. He recognized the ability of the young Irishman, his knowledge of the country and his wide influence in the valley. Perhaps he could help with other difficult problems of the frontier. One of these was the supply of the military garrison at Oswego. Because of the great risks, many merchants and bateaumen refused to carry supplies over the long route — the Mo-

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hawk River, the Oneida portage or carrying place, Oneida Lake and Oswego River to Lake Ontario — from Albany to Oswego. Clinton persuaded Johnson to undertake the task, and, with characteristic energy, he gathered supplies of food, hired wagons and bateaux, and provided protection, so that the fort was effectively supported. It was a big wartime contract, as we might call it, which could be both personally profitable and an act of patriotism. The Governor appreciated the achievement, but his political enemies in the Assembly held up payment on Johnson's bills until they owed him a large sum. After the war was over, and he was still unpaid, he complained that he could no longer afford to act. Finally, payment was still not forthcoming, and he resigned his commission as agent to deal with the Indians for the Province.

French and Indian War

In time of peace, colonial governments often allowed Indian affairs to drift, paying little attention if there were no clashes or untoward incidents, but in times of war or danger they hastened to act. In 1749, the French in Canada began a gradual encroachment on the western lands claimed by the English. They buried lead plates along the Ohio River to assert a claim to areas west of Pennsylvania and Virginia. At the same time, they tried to win over the western Indians and to turn them against the English. The Iroquois who were wards of the English likewise seemed disaffected. Learning of these circumstances, the English ministry became alarmed and urged the several colonies to meet together in an "interview" with the Six Nations, to appease them and to concert measures for defense. They instructed the Governor of New York to call a meeting for this purpose. This meeting, the Albany Congress, proved to be a landmark in American history.

The Congress which met in Albany in June and July 1754 was the largest intercolonial meeting yet held. Delegates came from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. New York was host, and the meetings were presided over by Governor James De Lancey; three councillors, one of whom was William Johnson, acted as delegates. Much time was lost because the Indians were slow in arriving. In the meantime, the delegates considered a plan of colonial union presented by Benjamin Franklin, which with some modifications was adopted by the Con-

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gress and sent to the provinces and to the English government for approval. If they could agree to act together, the colonies felt they could more successfully handle their Indian relations and colonial defense.

When the Indians finally arrived, a formal address was made to them and their complaints were heard. The Indian leaders, King Hendrick and his brother, Chief Abraham, made eloquent speeches, chiding the English for their failures, and demanding guarantees that they would keep their promises better than in the past. Hendrick said:

> Tis your fault Brethren that we are not Strengthened by Conquest, for we would have gone and taken Crown Point, but you hindered us. We have concluded to go and take it, but were told it was too late and that the Ice would not bear us. Instead of this you burnt your own Fort at Saraghtoga and run away from it, which was a Shame and a Scandall to you. Look about your Country and see, you have no Fortifications about you no not even to this City, tis but one step from Canada hither and the French may easily come and turn you out of your Doors.
>
> . . . Look at the French, they are Men, they are fortifying every where—but we are ashamed to say it, you are all like Women bare and Open without any Fortifications.

Chief Abraham asked why the Governor had not reinstated Colonel Johnson in charge of their affairs, as he had promised.

> We embrace this Opportunity of laying this Belt [and gave a Belt] before all our Brethren here present, and desire them that Colonel Johnson may be reinstated and have the management of Indian Affairs, for we all lived happy whilst they were under his Management, for we love him and he us, and he has always been our good and Trusty Friend.

The Albany Congress of 1754 was apparently a failure; nothing was accomplished in Indian affairs, and the "Plan of Union" was rejected by both the provincial assemblies and the ministry in England. Yet in the long view of the historian it was a step towards eventual union of the American Colonies. Also the Congress emphasized the need for united action in defense and in better management of Indian affairs. The British ministry now took steps in both fields.

In the fall of 1754, General Edward Braddock was given command of an army of regular troops and sent to Virginia to cooperate with colonial levies in a campaign against the French. War was not

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yet declared between France and Britain, but overt aggression on the frontier justified these steps. Young George Washington had been sent by the Governor of Virginia to remove the French from the forks of the Ohio, but he had been rebuffed in his talks, and later had lost a small skirmish with French troops. Now the responsibility for ousting the French was shifted to a professional soldier with the King's regular forces.

In accordance with his instructions, General Braddock asked the colonial governors to meet with him and the military leaders to plan their campaign. Colonel William Johnson attended the meeting at Alexandria, Va., in April 1755, in company with the governors of New York, Virginia, Massachusetts, and Maryland. Braddock was authorized to give him a commission as sole manager of Indian affairs; and Governor Shirley of Massachusetts suggested that Johnson was the "fittest person" to command a force of Indians and militia to be sent against the French Fort St. Frederic, at Crown Point on Lake Champlain. Governor Shirley was made commander of an expedition to be sent against Fort Niagara. And General Braddock with his regulars would assault Fort Duquesne at the forks of the Ohio. Thus Johnson had a double task: to pacify the Indians and to enlist their support for the English cause, and as major general to lead a military campaign. In spite of many difficulties, he was signally successful in both assignments.

The high hopes of the English for this three-pronged attack were rudely shattered when, on July 9, 1755, the army of General Braddock was disastrously defeated at the forks of the Ohio. The General was killed and his battered army fell back to the settlements. A well-trained army of British regulars had been defeated by the French, and their Indians and the frontier lay exposed to further attack.

In the meantime, General Shirley had assembled his forces at Albany and had embarked by bateaux up the Mohawk en route to Oswego. Johnson had held a conference with the Six Nations at his home, Mount Johnson (soon to be renamed Fort Johnson), where he won their support and a promise of Indian warriors for his campaign. Militia from New England and New York marched from Albany northward to the Carrying Place on the Hudson, where Johnson began a fort, later called "Fort Edward." About 200 Indians were to meet him there. Delay in the arrival of troops and in getting guns and supplies held up both of these expeditions, and news of Braddock's defeat almost shattered the morale of men and Indians. There was no longer a possibility of taking the French by surprise.

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Battle of Lake George

Early in the year, the French had sent a fleet and 3,000 regular troops to Quebec. They were under the command of a veteran general, Baron Dieskau, known for his success on the battlefields of Europe. He planned to attack the English at Oswego, until the capture of Braddock's papers revealed the strategy of the British. Then he concluded that Johnson's thrust toward Crown Point was the more immediate danger. Up the Richelieu River and Lake Champlain, he took his army to Crown Point. There he learned that Johnson was marching from Fort Edward to Lake St. Sacrement (which Johnson renamed Lake George). He decided to strike at Johnson's rear by seizing Fort Edward with its small contingent. With some 1,400 men (600 Canadians, 600 Indians, and 200 French grenadiers) he marched through the woods until he was a few miles from the fort. Here his Indians balked; they did not like to face the guns of the fort, and they said they preferred to attack Johnson's open camp.

In the meantime, Johnson's scouts had brought word of the French force and its threat to Fort Edward. A courier was sent to warn its commander, Colonel Blanchard, but the man was shot and his dispatch was captured. Johnson in a council of war decided to send a thousand men and Indians to relieve the fort. While marching down the road, they were ambushed by the French and their Indians. Colonel Ephraim Williams and a number of other officers were killed, as was also King Hendrick, the venerable leader of the Mohawks. The remainder of the troops retreated to Lake George.

Johnson had just time to throw up breastworks of felled trees, wagons and bateaux, ringing the camp, when the white-coated French regulars, their bayonets fixed and glittering in the sun, came down the road. He had also placed several cannon, 32-pounders, light and field pieces, where they would be most effective. While the fugitives from the first engagement were arriving in general disorder, he ranged his raw militia behind the temporary defenses. The French, who were having difficulty with their Indians, halted before charging the camp, thus giving the defenders an opportunity to collect their men. Then the French grenadiers came on in solid platoons and fired volleys. The British field pieces were fired several times at the French regulars, causing such havoc that they deployed to fight behind bushes and rocks as did the Indians and Canadians. For 5 hours the battle raged; the French tried a flank attack on Johnson's right, which was repulsed by the Massachusetts regiments of Titcomb and

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Ruggles. General Dieskau, the French commander was wounded, leaving the French without effective command. The English and their Indian allies leaped over the barricades and carried the fight to the enemy, who began to disperse. The French Indians had had enough, and they sifted into the forest, or turned to scalping and plunder.

During the fight Johnson received a ball in his thigh and went to his tent, but he returned to the engagement and inspired his men to a determined resistance. It had been a severe and costly fight with many casualties on both sides. Dieskau was brought to Johnson's tent a captive. He had boasted that he would spend the night at Johnson's camp—he meant as victor—and now found himself there as a prisoner.

The retiring French were now forced into a third engagement. Colonel Blanchard at the carrying place (Fort Edward) learned of the battle and sent his New Hampshire men and Yorkers to help Johnson. They found the French collecting their wounded and burying their dead, and fell upon them. After a smart action, in which there were losses on both sides, the French began their retreat to Canada. Johnson's Indians, mourning the loss of Hendrick, had no stomach for further action and also withdrew. Smarting from their losses, the English dug in. A council of war decided that it would be dangerous to attempt to follow the French, from whom they anticipated another attack.

News of the engagement and the repulse of the enemy electrified the English. The colonies rallied to send reinforcements to Johnson for his expected advance upon Crown Point. Conditions, however, rendered this impossible. The Indians had gone home and could not be persuaded to return. Terms of enlistment were running out and militiamen wanted to return to their farms; there was a shortage of provisions and supplies. So Johnson had his engineer lay out a stronger fort on which the men labored throughout the fall. He called it Fort William Henry, and it represented a new outpost in the defense of English America.

There was wild elation and great celebration in the capitals of the American Colonies when they learned of the victory at Lake George. It was the first real success of the war. After the defeat of Braddock and the failure of General Shirley to get beyond Oswego in his campaign against Niagara, it was the one bright spot on the British record. Reinforcements were sent to Albany to fill up the regiments which were expected to go on against Crown Point. General Johnson was acclaimed a military genius; an inexperienced colonial with only militia had defeated French regulars under a famous soldier,

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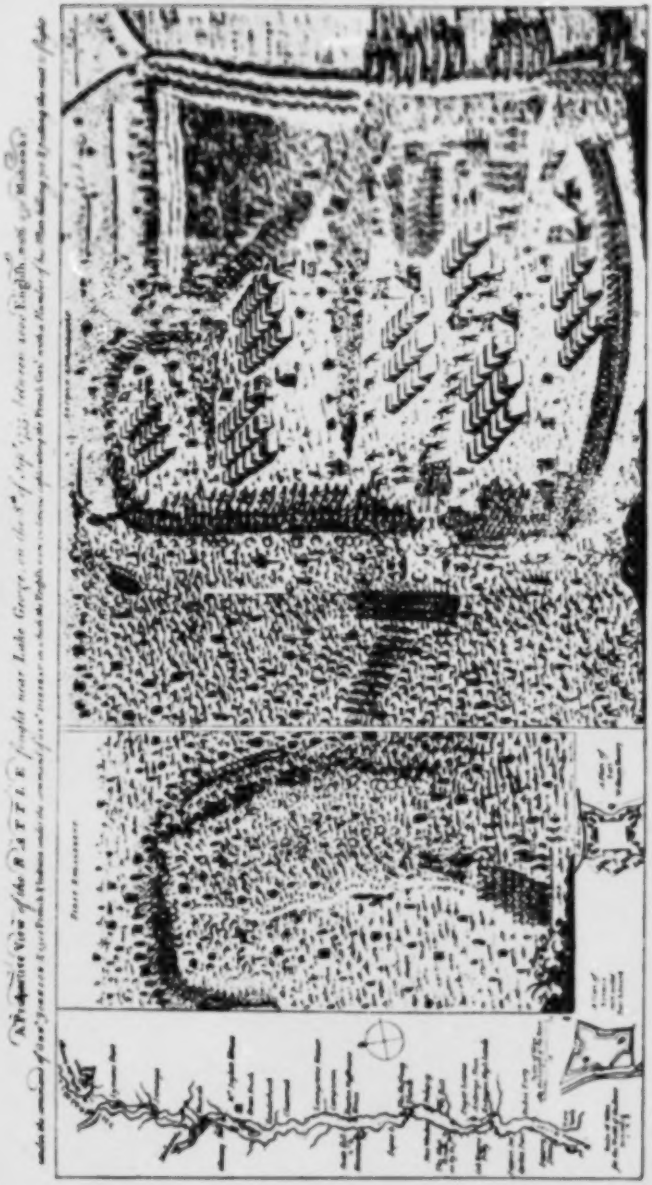
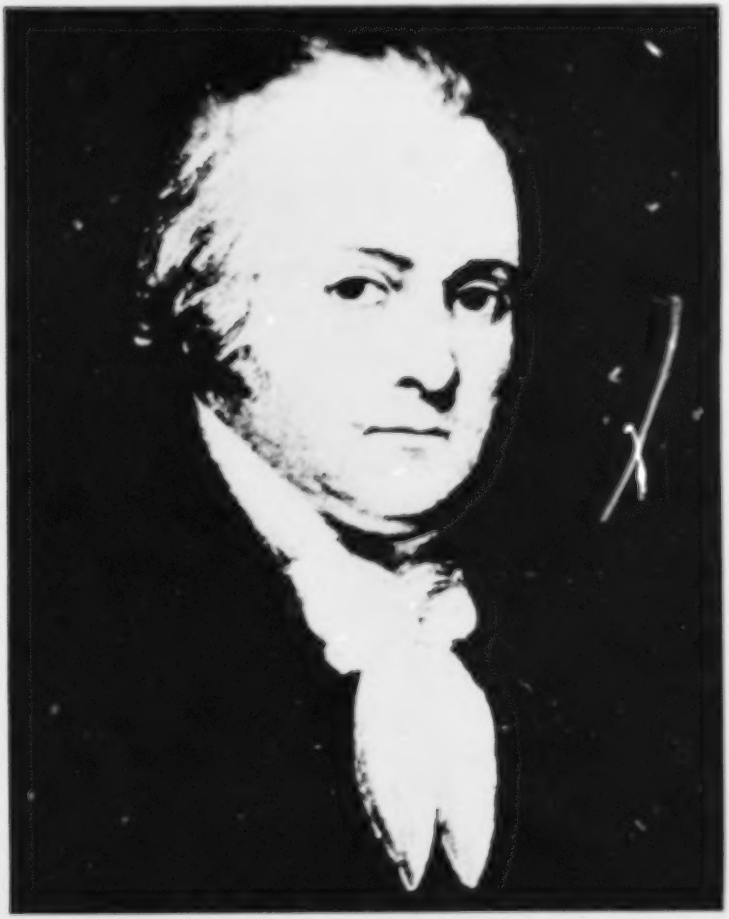


Battle of Lake George
Contemporary sketch by Samuel Blodget.
From Documentary History of New York, vol. IV, p. 256

and had taken him captive. Since Johnson was a New Yorker and most of his troops were New Englanders they had viewed him with some distrust, but Thomas Williams, a Massachusetts surgeon with the army, described him in glowing terms:



Sir John Johnson
Pastel by St. Memin.
Johnson Hall, New York State Historic Site, Johnstown, N. Y.

I must say he is a complete gentleman, and willing to oblige and please all men, familiar and free of access to the lowest

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> Centinel, a gentleman of uncommon smart sense and even temper; never yet was saw him in a ruffle, or use any bad language—in short I was never so disappointed [disillusioned] in a person in the idea I had of him before I came from home, in my life; to sum it up he is almost universally beloved & esteemed by officers & soldiers as a second Marlborough for coolness of head and warmness of heart.

Not everyone was so enthusiastic, and criticism of the General and his campaign started, especially when he did not push on against Crown Point. New Englanders grumbled over his plan to fortify Fort William Henry on New York soil and refused to support it. General Shirley, who had succeeded to the command of all British forces on the death of Braddock, was jealous of Johnson's success, while his Niagara campaign had been stopped at Oswego. Moreover, Shirley blamed Johnson for his trouble in getting Indians to go with him, and challenged Johnson's authority over the Indians. Some critics started a story that General Lyman had wanted to push on toward Ticonderoga, but that Johnson had held back. Later, these same persons claimed that Lyman as second-in-command while Johnson was wounded should have credit for the battle. They even said it was not such a victory after all.

Sir William Johnson

These criticisms stirred Johnson's friends to promote his interests and his reputation at home and abroad. After he had resigned his command, General Johnson was brought to New York, feted, and became celebrated as a conquering hero. Vivid reports of his merit were sent home to the ministry. The latter had been quick to recognize the importance of Johnson's achievement, not so much for the size of the battle, as for the changed morale, and the reversal of the climate of defeat. In November, the King awarded him a hereditary patent as baronet, and Parliament granted him a purse of £5000. Not until February 1756 did news of these honors reach America.

As winter came on, the campaign to the northward was abandoned, although a garrison held Fort William Henry and continued its construction. General Johnson resigned his commission and returned to his home on the Mohawk River. He had plenty to do to manage the Indians; in February 1756, he received a royal commission as "Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Northern District,"

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thus confirming and making permanent his wartime authority. He also got a commission as "Colonel of the Six Nations." He devoted himself to Indian affairs, holding frequent meetings with them, journeying westward to their castles and the Council Fire at Onondaga, and, whenever needed, enlisting Indians to help the British armies. He was suffering from his wound and from ill health, but he was by no means inactive.

Now, too, he returned to the care of his lands and his business. During the war, the fine stone house which he had built for himself in 1749 and named "Mount Johnson," was fortified and protected by a garrison of soldiers. Henceforth it was known as "Fort Johnson." Here he carried on his trade, his negotiations with Indians, and managed his farm lands with their tenants. It was one of the finest of colonial houses, and exceptional for this outpost of the frontier. Not only officers of the army, but other travelers and visitors enjoyed its hospitality. It was described by a French observer in 1757 as follows:

> Colonel Johnson's mansion is situate on the border or left bank of the River Mohawk; it is three stories high; built of stone, with port holes (crenelees) and a parapet and flanked with four bastions on which are some small guns. In the same yard, on both sides of the Mansion, there are two small houses; that on the right of the entrance is a Store, and on the left is designed for workmen, negroes and other domestics. The yard gate is a heavy swing gate well ironed; it is on the Mohawk river side; from this gate to the river there is about 200 paces of level ground. The high road passes here. A small rivulet coming from the north empties itself into the Mohawk river, about 200 paces below the yard. On this stream there is a Mill about 50 paces distant from the house; below the Mill is the miller's house where grain and flour are stored, and on the other side of the creek 100 paces from the mill, is a barn in which cattle and fodder are kept. One hundred and fifty paces from Colonel Johnson's Mansion at the North side, on the left bank of the little Creek, is a little hill on which is a small house with port holes where is ordinarily kept a guard of honor of some twenty men, which serves also as an advanced post.

Two years later Guy Johnson made a drawing of Fort Johnson, on which many of the features described can be noted. Here Sir Johnson lived until 1763, after which it was occupied by his son. The house still stands, a historic building associated with many great events and persons.

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Some writers have passed over these years of Sir William Johnson's life as unmarked by great events. His work among the Indians was not spectacular, and many military leaders of the time thought little of the help which Indians could give them in battle. But the fame and reputation of Johnson were spreading. Whenever Indian affairs were considered, and wherever there was a crisis in Indian relations, his counsel was sought. His acquaintances and correspondents throughout the colonies were increasing in number. When again chance thrust him into the main stream of the country's history, he was a man of recognized consequence.

The Close of the War

The war had been going badly. Recoiling from the reverse at Lake George, the French built Fort Carillon at Ticonderoga. This now rather than Crown Point was their southern outpost and only the length of Lake George separated them from the English at Fort William Henry. Between these posts, scouting parties ranged through the forest or skirted the shores of the lake, sounding out the enemy's defenses. The redoubtable Robert Rogers became famous for his sorties down the lake and his commando raids on the French.

In 1756, war was officially declared in Europe and more attention was given to military affairs in America. General Shirley had laid plans for new campaigns, but he was now superseded as supreme commander by Lord Loudoun. A professional soldier of ability, Loudoun brought over new regiments of regulars and organized the Royal Americans, recruited in America but with English officers. His delays and indecision, however, gave the French their opportunity.

The place of the defeated Dieskau was taken by the energetic Marquis de Montcalm. The French were soon on the move. Anticipating the principal English thrust on Lake George, Montcalm planned a diversion. With three regiments and Indian support he set out from Fort Frontenac, and, in August, surprised Fort Ontario at Oswego. The English had been sending supplies and reinforcements to Oswego, and had started to build a fleet on Lake Ontario, but their efforts were uncertain and the fortifications were weak. The demoralized garrison soon surrendered to the French who destroyed the forts. Hence the French had control of Lake Ontario and the English withdrew down the Mohawk valley. Their prestige was at a low ebb, and Sir William had great difficulty in holding the allegiance of the Six Nations.

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The following year (1757) Montcalm led an attack upon Fort William Henry and was able to destroy it. Again, it was the weakness of the English and the indecision of their officers which gave the French an easy victory. Loudoun had gone off by sea for a futile attempt to take Louisbourg. Colonel Monro with the forces at Fort William Henry made a gallant defense and appealed to Major General Webb at Fort Edward for help. Webb, judging the French to have superior numbers, made no effort to relieve the fort but sent Monro a letter advising him to make terms. When this fell into the hands of Montcalm, he was assured of success. Sir William had marched with Indians to Fort Edward and pressed Webb to reinforce the fort, but to no avail. Webb was ill and incompetent and his inaction led to disaster. Worse still was the massacre of the English prisoners which followed. Montcalm had promised protection, but he was unable to control his Indian allies who fell upon the defenseless captives, stripped and plundered them, and killed many. These defeats for which he was not wholly responsible brought the recall of General Loudoun.

General James Abercromby now succeeded to the command and assembled a formidable army of 15,000 men at Albany. Moving northward, this force was borne down the waters of Lake George on a great flotilla of boats for an attack upon Ticonderoga. English spirits were high for they seemed to have an overwhelming force and were inspired by the brilliant leadership of George Augustus, Viscount Howe. The attack should have succeeded but was badly mismanaged. Without waiting for his artillery, which were never brought into action, Abercromby ordered a frontal attack with infantry. Lord Howe was killed in an early skirmish. The English assault was repulsed with such heavy losses that Abercromby, to the great disgust of many, gave up the campagin and withdrew to Albany. Sir William had recruited Indians for the campaign, but they were sent to occupy the mountain which rose above the fort, and they saw little action. It was not their kind of fighting. Abercromby had failed, and the ministry looked for another commander.

Now the fortunes of war were changing. While Abercromby was retreating from Ticonderoga, General Jeffery Amherst was successful in capturing the fortress of Louisbourg. Colonel John Bradstreet with 3,000 men, a fleet of bateaux and some Indian auxiliaries procured by Sir William seized and destroyed Fort Frontenac without the loss of a man. Although weakly defended, Frontenac was a significant link in the line of French communication, and its loss was a heavy blow to French prestige.

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William Pitt, the new prime minister, chose able commanders to carry on the war in 1759. Jeffery Amherst, the hero of Louisbourg, replaced Abercromby at Lake George, and General James Wolfe, his dashing aide, was selected to besiege Quebec. At the close of 1758, the French had lost Fort Duquesne at the forks of the Ohio, which fell to an expedition commanded by General John Forbes. The time was ripe for a renewal of the project to take Fort Niagara.

Taking Fort Niagara

Sir William had long urged the importance of capturing Niagara, and he assured Amherst that a considerable force of Indians would be available for the attack. Now the Senecas of Western New York had turned against the French. Amherst agreed with the plan and selected Brigadier General John Prideaux to lead the expedition. A force of 2,200 men, including an artillery unit, was gathered at Schenectady and, by the usual bateaux route, proceeded to Oswego. There they were met by 600 Indians, later augmented to 900, under Sir William. From there the expedition proceeded in whaleboats and bateaux, skirting the shore of Lake Ontario and putting in at coves during the night, until they were only 4 miles from Fort Niagara. The whole plan had been kept secret so as not to alarm the French; French boats patrolling the lake failed to discover the approach until the landing on July 6. Too late they attacked Oswego, which was defended by a small protective force under Lieutenant Colonel Haldimand.

Although the principal campaigns of 1759 were those of Amherst and Wolfe, the French were well aware of the importance of Niagara. They had sent an able engineer, Captain Pouchot, to rebuild and strengthen the defenses of the fort and they counted upon contingents at neighboring posts to assist in the event of an attack. They also depended upon their allies among the western Indians. Fort Niagara was a powerful influence in keeping these tribes friendly and in controlling their trade. Its loss would break the supply line to the westward, which the French could ill afford.

After landing at Four Mile Creek on July 6, General Prideaux began a system of entrenchments with gun emplacements, gradually working his lines toward the fort. Within 2 weeks, they were close enough for the British to bring an effective fire upon the defenders and to batter the fort's bastions. Then on July 20, Prideaux was

00031

accidentally killed by the explosion of a coehorn, one of the mortars being fired at the enemy. Sir William Johnson, having the rank of Colonel, then assumed command and continued the siege operations.

As soon as Captain Pouchot learned of the English landing, he sent out Indian couriers asking for reinforcements. Joncaire Chabert at Little Niagara, the trading post above the falls, crossed the river and finally was able to come into the beleaguered fort. Messengers summoned the French forces on the Ohio, Lake Erie, and at Detroit. At length, Pouchot learned of their approach. He well knew the strength of the English, and advised De Lignery to come down the west bank of the Niagara River where he would not encounter the main army. This was good advice, but the French commander was supremely confident; "there were about 600 French and 1000 Indians," Pouchot reported, "who when passing the little rapid at the outlet of Lake Erie resembled a floating island, so black was the river with bateaux and canoes."

But Sir William, well informed by his Indian intelligence, sent a detachment to entrench the roadway at a place called La Belle Famille, and chose the scene of battle. The French and their Indians, like Braddock in 1755, marched into a trap. Captain James De Lancey wrote the best first-hand account of the engagement:

> The 23d. I was sent with 150 of the light infantry to encamp near the River close to the Road leading from the Falls to the Fort, in order to prevent the enemy's throwing any Succour into the Fort . . . that night and the next morning I threw up a breastwork in Front of my camp. . . . I sent a Serjeant to Sir William to acquaint him that the Enemy were coming and in ten Minutes I was joined by three pickets of 50 each who were that morning ordered to reinforce me. about a quarter of an hour after Lt. Colonel Massey arrived with 150 of the 46th with which and the picket of the 44th he drew up on the Right of me, and the other two pickets on the left . . . about 100 Indians went to the left of the whole in order to fall on the Enemys Flank.
>
> Some of our Indians went to the Enemy's Indians to prevail on them not to fight But the French told them, they did not want to fight with our Indians but with us, on this our Indians returned and told us, the Enemy was coming, which they soon did with a very great noise and shouting;
>
> They began the attack on the Right and our Men kept their ground and soon returned their fire, I ordered the light infantry not to fire until they were sure of their mark, which they punctually obeyed; Part of the enemy inclined to the

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left and gave us a very smart fire, we did not fire for some time and then only about ten shot at some few who came very near us, very soon after this I found the Enemy's fire slacken, upon which I sent Col. Massey to desire he would let me leave the Breastwork, and rush in on the enemy which he granted, desired I would move slow, and advanced with his party on the Right, we jumped over the Breastwork and rushed in on the Enemy who immediately gave way.

They then Endeavoured to Flank us on the left, but I ordered a party from the Right to Move to the left which they did, and with them I pushed forward to the enemy, who falling in with the party which was on my left immediately ran away as fast as they could, and never offered to rally afterwards, a few of them remained behind and exchanged a few shots with us, and were either taken or killed.

Our Indians as soon as they saw the Enemy give way pursued them very briskly and took and killed numbers of them, we pursued about five Miles and then returned, we took several prisoners in our return under the bank of the River.

Among the captives were the officers De Lignery, Aubry, and Marin. Sir William now summoned Pouchot to surrender; when that unfortunate officer found that his relievers were prisoners of the English, he had no other choice. His fort was weakened, his garrison had suffered much, and his provisions were running low. Sir William dictated the capitulation and took possession of the fort. Over 600 of the enemy were taken prisoners and guaranteed safe conduct. Sir William by great exertions prevented his Indian allies from falling upon the prisoners, as Montcalm was unable to do at Fort William Henry. Leaving a small force at the fort, he moved his army and prisoners to Oswego. His command was then turned over to Colonel Thomas Gage.

The fall of Niagara was an event of the greatest importance. General Charles Lee called it:

> . . . a most glorious and solidly advantageous acquisition, by its strength most formidable, and by its situation absolute Empress of the Inland parts of North America, commanding the two great Lakes, Erie, Ontario; the River Ohio, all the upper Nations of Indians, and consequently engrossing the whole Fur trade, cutting off the communication between Canada and Mississippi, & thus defeating their favourite and long projected scheme of forming a chain round our Colonies, so as in time to have justled us into the Sea.

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Johnson informed General Stanwix at Pittsburgh that the French forts were no longer serious threats to his westward campaign. While the victory was soon dwarfed by the fall of Quebec, it was a substantial advance in the British conquest of North America. Sir William was acclaimed a second time a military conqueror, and his reputation soared. A map of the campaign with a diagram of Fort Niagara made on the spot was later published with his name and coat of arms. Critics of "Johnson's Indians" had to admit that these allies had played a key role in the victory.

The following year, 1760, witnessed the final campaigns of the war. Gage in command of Oswego was directed by General Amherst to use his forces to seize La Gallette on the upper St. Lawrence, while the British closed in on Montreal. Sir William brought a number of Indians from Onondaga for the purpose and urged Gage to go down the river, but that officer chose instead to devote himself to the completion of Fort Ontario. Impatient with the delay, many Indians drifted away, but Sir William and the others moved down to participate in the occupation of Montreal. As the fighting came to an end, Sir William longed for the pursuits of peace.

Sir William—Colonial Statesman

The Treaty of Paris 1763 removed France from North America and ended the threat to New York's northern frontier. The forts at Oswego, Niagara, and Detroit were yielded, and the inhabitants of Canada became British subjects. The hostile Indian menace seemed at an end, but, with the accession of territory, came new responsibilities. Among these new responsibilities were the Canadian Indian tribes which now came under Sir William as Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

The transfer of the Indian allegiance from France to England was not easy. The French *habitants* clung to the hope that some day France might return, and so they intrigued to keep the friendship of the Indians. Traders were reluctant to see the posts which they had occupied so long in the hands of a new regime. Yet, in November 1760, Major Robert Rogers, the noted ranger, was sent to receive the French surrender of Detroit. The next year Sir William journeyed to Niagara and Detroit and held a general parley with the western Indians to assure them of the friendly intentions of the British. He had built up an organization in the Indian Department of deputies,

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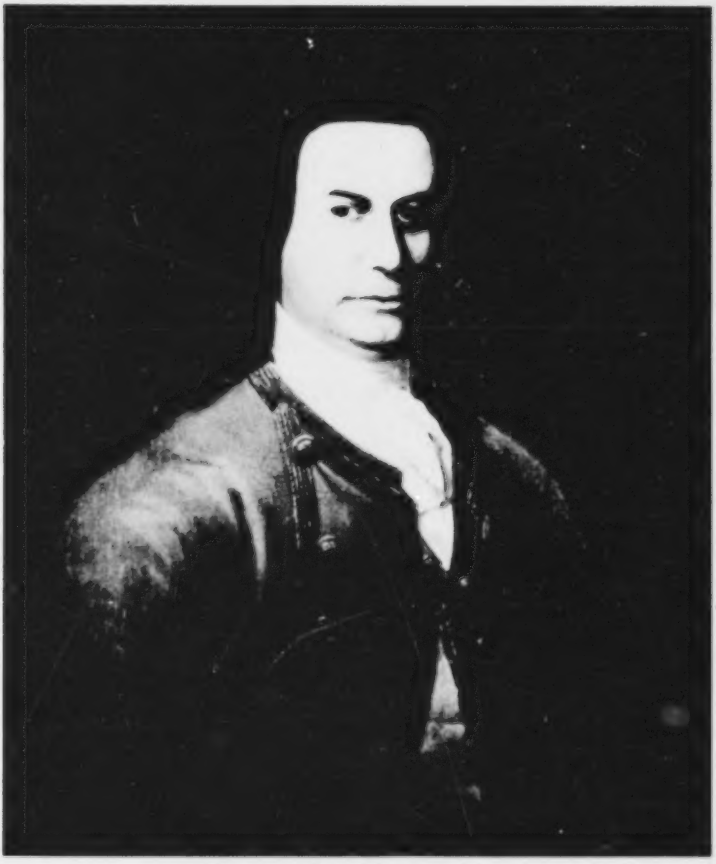
commissaries, and interpreters to regulate trade and to maintain good relations between the Indians and the whites. He now appointed his aide, Colonel Daniel Claus, as his deputy for Canada and sent him to Montreal. He tried to allay the fears of these former wards of the French, to cultivate their trade through proper channels, and also to control the traders and the whites on the frontier. This was difficult, for peace brought new opportunities for settlement. Frontiersmen were impatient of restraint, and showed little regard for the claims and rights of the red man. Sir William hoped for a smooth transition, and therefore wanted to continue the practice of conciliating the Indians with gifts.



Sir William Johnson
Painting attributed to Thomas McIlworth.
Courtesy of New York Historical Society, New York City

General Jeffery Amherst, who now commanded the British forces in North America, however, had a different point of view. He considered the Indians of little value as fighting men, felt they were no longer needed as allies, since the French menace to the Northern border was removed, and therefore would cut off expenditures for gifts and support for the tribes. Such an abrupt change of policy Sir William knew would alienate his old friends and cause others to contrast this parsimony with French generosity. He and George Croghan, deputy for Pennsylvania, protested, and the latter threatened to quit the service. At the same time, the western Indians were worried by the continual pressure of frontiersmen encroaching upon their lands. Their resentment eventually boiled over in the "Pontiac Uprising."

Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, was credited with organizing the western tribes for a war against the white man. The so-called "conspiracy," hatched in the usual secretive manner of the tribes, called for a concerted attack upon the posts of the northwest. Sir William was not unaware of this undercurrent of Indian intrigue and warned his superiors, but Amherst gave no heed. He thought the Indians incapable of a serious threat to British rule. When in July 1763, the Indians attacked the whole line of western forts—Michilimackinac, Detroit, Venango, LeBoeuf, and Fort Pitt—the plan almost succeeded. Only Detroit and Fort Pitt received sufficient warning to avoid capture, and they were closely besieged for some time. A bloody war erupted, and the British hurriedly sent reinforcements and relief. The frontier receded eastward as settlers fled in panic.

Sir William, who had warned of the danger and had tried to pacify the Indians, now vigorously supported the measures for relief. Through his efforts, the Six Nations, except for the westernmost Senecas, remained neutral. Of course the British, due to their superior numbers, their organization, and their supply of arms, were bound to win, but for 2 years the rebellion terrified the frontier and caused many settlements to be abandoned. British regiments found it no easy task to recapture the western posts and to restore peace and order to the back country. Not until 1766 was Pontiac willing to submit and to acknowledge defeat. In July of that year, a conference was held at Oswego, where Sir William representing the British crown received the capitulation of Chief Pontiac and his promise to keep the peace.

Yet if the Indians were to remain peaceful, Sir William argued, the whites must be restrained, the fur trade must be regulated to prevent frauds and impositions, and Indian relations must be conducted in a fair and intelligent manner. This could only be done if there were

00036

centralized control in the Indian Department. He drew up a plan for the reorganization of the service and urged it upon the British ministry. The proposal was both logical and statesmanlike, but the ministry was seeking a way to cut down expenses after the war, and they rejected the plan. Instead, they returned control of the fur trade to the several colonial governments who either so economized or so neglected affairs as to bring back many of the old abuses. There was general chaos in the rules applied and much dissatisfaction among both Indians and whites. Left without restraint and taking advantage of leniency and confusion in regulations, the traders became a law unto themselves. This contributed to the already unsettled conditions of the frontier.

Even more disturbing was the increased pressure on the frontier. With Pontiac subdued, frontiersmen, land speculators, and agents of newly organized companies surged into the West. The Indians were alarmed, for they saw a speedy end to their hunting grounds as the whites moved inexorably westward. The same kind of resentment which had spurred the Pontiac uprising now reappeared.

For some time, Sir William had urged upon the ministry a limitation on westward expansion. He suggested that a line be drawn between the Indian lands and those to be open for settlement. He understood the dangers of too rapid expansion, and he feared the excesses of the frontiersmen who often viewed the Indian tribes as mere obstacles to progress. He well knew how the Indians felt and how well justified were their complaints. He had spent his life making accommodation of the white men and the natives as neighbors, friends, and allies. In so doing, he had preached mutual understanding and respect which he felt were the only sure bases for peace. He wanted a treaty which would be fair to both sides.

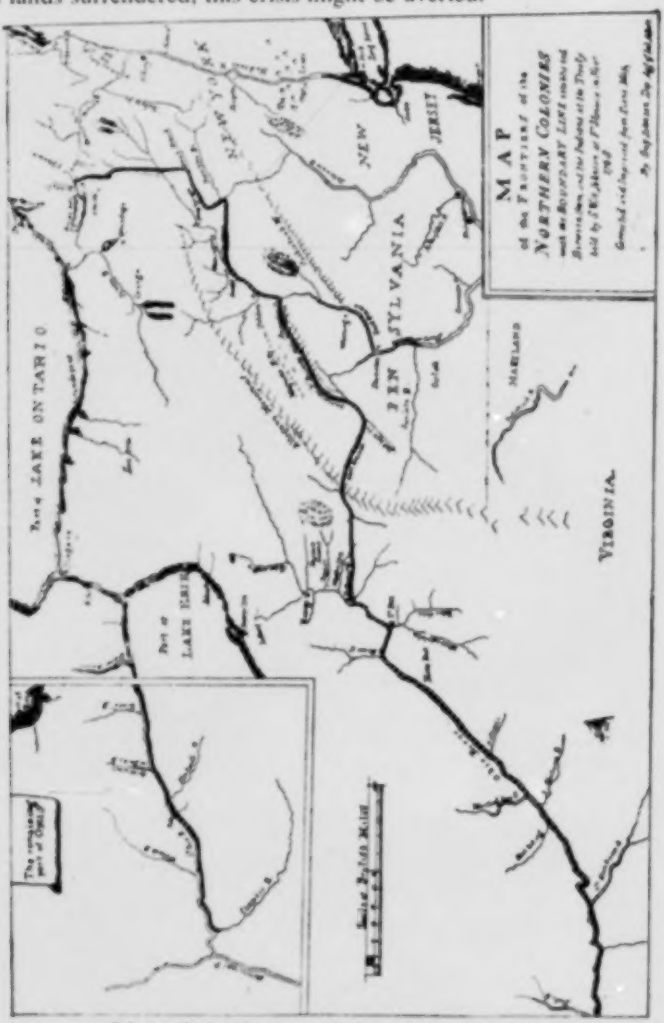
Now he prevailed upon the ministry to sponsor a general congress to draw a demarcation line. The provincial governments and the several Indian nations involved would send delegations. The result was the Fort Stanwix Congress of 1768.

The Fort Stanwix Treaty may be considered the apogee of Sir William's career. It was the largest and most pretentious meeting ever assembled. Some 3,000 Indians represented not only the Six Nations, but also their allies and dependent tribes. The task of gathering them, accomodating them, and feeding them for a period of six weeks was a responsibility which only Sir William, with his long experience in Indian management and diplomacy, could handle.

The initial purpose of the Congress was to prevent conflict between Indians and white frontiersmen by drawing a boundary line, separat-

00037

ing the Indians' lands from those which the provinces had granted for settlement. There were ugly rumors of coming conflict, and Indian agents were even predicting another uprising if Indians were not mollified. If a line could be drawn and the Indians could be paid for the lands surrendered, this crisis might be averted.



Map of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, 1768
Drawn by Guy Johnson.
From Johnson Papers, vol. VI, group p. 450

00038

There were many complicating factors, however, which made such a settlement difficult. Many large grants of land had already been made to land speculators of great influence and these would have to be considered. A group of "suffering traders," who had lost extensively due to the depredations of the Indians in Pontiac's uprising of 1763, now asked for indemnity and both the Indians and government had promised them relief. Some missionaries tried to safeguard the interests of religion, or of Indians under their tutelage, by setting off some lands. They opposed the grants to settlers. And the several provinces had their own interests in expansion. The Board of Trade had recommended an arbitrary line to Johnson, but he found this difficult to reconcile with the Indian claims and those of the provinces.

Indian agreement to participate in the meeting was difficult to obtain and slow to realize. Sir William first summoned the Six Nations, but it was also necessary to include dependent people of the confederacy and others whose interests were involved. First called for July 1768, the Congress had to be postponed until September. Representatives from Virginia and Pennsylvania arrived at Johnson Hall early in September, but it was September 15 before they and Sir William began their journey up the Mohawk to Fort Stanwix. They found only a small number of the Indians there, and it was a whole month before the official proceedings could begin. Distinguished guests and delegates—Governor John Penn of Pennsylvania and Governor William Franklin of New Jersey—had to wait while the tribes slowly assembled; they halted for days to condole deaths of their chiefs, and they had frequent excuses for other delays. Governor Penn and Chief Justice Allen left for Philadelphia on October 15, before the official proceedings began.

These delays of course caused the expenses to mount. Sir William had first estimated a cost of £10,000. When he and his party came up the river in five boats they were followed by 20 boatloads of presents. Added to this, however, was the cost of provisioning and housing the growing throng. Some 800 Indians at the beginning increased to 3,100 before the treaty was finished. The cost amounted to £21,900 New York currency when Sir William rendered his final bill.

Sir William's greatest difficulty was with the Oneidas, who protested the extension of the line through New York to include the cession of great grants along the Mohawk. The Six Nations also insisted on the extension of the line down the Ohio River nearly to the Mississippi, by virtue of their claim over the Indians of that area. The final demarcation line took in more land than the Crown had

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asked, and for this Sir William was reprimanded. But he had to balance the speculators', traders', and provincial claims, and also achieve a settlement which the Indians would accept. With the acceptance of a huge gift, guarantees of their lands within the area ceded, and a promise of observance of the line, Sir William achieved a diplomatic victory and passed a crisis in Indian affairs. It is true that the treaty marked a great extension of governmental control over the western lands of the Indians, but this seemed inevitable. It had been achieved, moreover, without loss of face or of the confidence of the Indians. But the test was whether the line would be observed. It was not long before white settlers were disregarding the restraints of the governments and pushing farther west.

Historians have been critical of Sir William's role in the Fort Stanwix treaty. Some have said that he betrayed the Indians by paving the way for settlement of large areas of the West, and that he favored the land speculators and the governments. Also he had violated the explicit instructions of the ministry in drawing the line. He was blamed for accepting the Six Nations as spokesmen for the other tribes. And of course the subsequent failure of the abitrary line to hold back settlement and to prevent Indian wars proved that it was no solution.

All of these criticisms are true in part. The line was a compromise, the best that could be done under the circumstances. Yet the Congress averted an immediate conflict. It recognized the traders and speculators as forces to be controlled rather than denied. It recognized the Indian rights, and if it preferred the Confederacy as negotiator it was because the Six Nations were the most capable. That the settlement was not final or permanent was no fault of Sir William. He wrote to the ministry:

> I have staked my reputation with the Indians that the Several Articles they have made shall be observed, without which the charges attending the Assembling them at this time and all other endeavors would have been ineffectual, they have at length relied on my Assurances and I am confident that the regard paid to them will be the only security for the observance of the line.

Culture on the Frontier

With the tumults and the cares of the wars receding, Sir William turned his attention to his lands and their development. While on his

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journey to Detroit in 1761, he collected seeds for his farm and made plans for future buildings. He wrote about the new establishment which he planned several miles north of the Mohawk River. Fort Johnson, once thought commodious for his growing family, had become crowded. It was flanked by barracks filled with soldiers; it was frequently overrun with friendly Indians; and, as a convenient stop on the principal route to the interior, it was visited by all manner of travelers. Warren Johnson said that it had "more Custom than any Inn in England." A new farm and residence far removed from the river would provide space for Sir William's many activities and perhaps be less troubled with such distractions.

In the spring of 1763, Sir William began the construction of his new mansion, Johnson Hall, in the midst of his farm. Unlike Fort Johnson, which was of field stone, this was a wooden frame construction, though the boards were rusticated to resemble stone blocks. Samuel Fuller of Schenectady was the builder and he and his men worked throughout the summer, so that by winter the house was ready to be occupied and furnished. Its broad hallways, with stairway, were flanked by two large rooms on each side on the first and second floors. The ground floor contained the kitchen and the service rooms.

While the mansion was being built, the carpenters were also at work on barns, a coach house, and a bowmaster's house for the overseer. Soon there would be mills, shops for craftsmen, and a number of dwellings for servants and tenants. A few years later, two stone blockhouses were erected, flanking the mansion. Apparently intended for defense of this residence on the frontier (for the Hall, unlike Fort Johnson, had no defensive features), they served at various times for offices, for storehouses or the "Indian store," and for general utility. At one time, when danger threatened, they were connected by a stockade to enclose a courtyard. But the general outline of the Hall grounds showed no fear of hostile neighbors.

About 2 years after building the Hall, Sir William laid out a town 1 mile away. Some 120 families, most of them his tenants or craftsmen, were living in houses which were built for them, and there was now need for a church and a school. When the stone church was completed in 1766, Sir William applied to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to send a minister, or missionary, for whom he promised a parsonage and glebe—a living worth £60. It was not easy to fill the place, and not until 1773 did the Reverend Mosley become its first minister. By this time, the town had so grown that the church was enlarged. It was provided with an organ imported from England and a canopied pew for Sir William.

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New settlers appeared rapidly as Sir William held out encouragement to artisans, merchants, and hardy immigrant farmers. A number of families from the Scottish Highlands were of the middle or upper class, a highly desirable type of colonist. Many of these were Catholics and among them was their priest who had a house and his own chapel. This liberal policy of Sir William was in marked contrast to the general intolerance of the times. The growth of settlement and the progress of industry were such that their patron could boast of the activity even in winter. The town, he said, was "a mere thorough Fair, Every Day full of Sleds bringing Ashes [for potash] to the Mayor, and others bringing goods from him, & numbers on business to me, which makes the place more lively than Albany or Schenectady."

Sir William hoped that his estates might become a manor, with markets, fairs, courts, and other institutions like those of the Van Rensselaers and Livingstons. Yet is was too late; the governors were no longer able to issue such patents. He had to be content with his markets and fairs. He was able, nevertheless, in 1772 to have the new Tryon County set off from Albany, with Johnstown as its county seat. Here he built a courthouse, which still stands, and here he set up the county government. Thus he pushed forward the frontier of settlement, promoted industry and culture, and expanded his "empire," under benevolent supervision.

Life at Johnson Hall

When Sir William moved into Johnson Hall, he also made provision for his growing family. In 1762, his deputy for Canada, Daniel Claus, was married to his eldest daughter Ann (or Nancy), so Sir William had his carpenters remodel his first house on the river as their home. It was occupied by the Claus family until the Revolution. In 1763, too, his nephew Guy Johnson was married to his daughter Mary (or Polly), and for them Sir William built a fine house 1 mile east of Fort Johnson. "Guy Park" was opened in 1766. Fort Johnson he kept for his son John who lived there after his return from England in 1767. There in 1773, Sir John brought his bride, Polly Watts of New York.

The mistress of Johnson Hall was the Indian housekeeper, Molly Brant, whose growing brood of Sir William's natural children en-

00042

livened the household. The eldest, Peter, was only four in 1763, and he had two infant sisters. Before Sir William's death, there were eight of Molly's children who received the best of care and education. It was for them, as well as for others of the neighborhood, that Sir William established a free school in Johnstown. Formerly all instruction was given by a clergyman. Sir William sought a teacher in New York, and there was a succession of "masters." For further education, Peter was sent to Philadelphia and to Montreal; other children attended boarding schools in New York and Schenectady.

These families joined in creating a lively social life at Johnson Hall. Perhaps less frequently the stopping place for travelers than Fort Johnson, Johnson Hall gave gracious hospitality to many visitors. Here came for official visits New York's governors, Moore and Tryon. On their way to Fort Stanwix, Sir William entertained Governor Franklin of New Jersey, Governor John Penn, and Chief Justice Allen of Pennsylvania. Sometimes, as in the case of the governors and their staffs, their ladies and attendants graced the Hall. Most notable as visitors of the fair sex were the Duchess of Gordon and Lady Susan O'Brien (daughter of Lord Ilchester). Then there were men of affairs, military officers, and land speculators (great men to be)! For all of these, Sir William played the role of country squire, dispensing hospitality, good cheer, and a touch of the culture of the Colonies or of the Old World.

On social occasions, there were entertainments of music and drama. Daniel Claus was an enthusiastic musician, a violinist, and little Peter also had his fiddle. Sir John, after returning from England, played the harpsichord which he brought home. There was group singing, and no doubt much hilarity on festive occasions. At one time, an Irish harper served as a kind of court musician. Sir William established in Johnstown St. Patrick's Lodge of the Masonic order in 1766, and monthly meetings were sometimes held at the Hall. St. Patrick's day was always an occasion for festivity, heartily joined by Sir William and his Irish cronies. Hence the Hall was an island of society in the wilderness.

Life at Johnson Hall, however, could not ignore the presence of the Indians. Sir William carried on his Indian diplomacy there, and there he established a council fire of the Six Nations. A continuous round of Indian visits, conferences, and councils meant that Indians were never missing from the scene. An Indian store was maintained to supply gifts for Indian diplomacy, and houses were built nearby for the more numerous visitations. In 1772, a log building 100 feet

00043

long was erected for Indian use. Sir William once complained to Gage that "every Room & Corner in my House [is] Constantly full of Indians."

It was chiefly for the Indians that Sir William promoted religion and the establishment of churches. As early as 1750, the Reverend John Ogilvie, rector of the English church, St. Peter's in Albany, and missionary to the Mohawks at Fort Hunter, found Johnson his chief patron. Ogilvie served also as military chaplain and aide to Sir William during Indian conferences and on campaigns. Ogilvie revised the English prayer book, printed in Mohawk, under Sir William's auspices. Missions to the Indians were promoted by Sir William both as a civilizing force and through his earnest support of the Anglican Church. He underwrote the building of St. George's Church, Schenectady, and his own church in Johnstown. He encouraged clergymen to come to the area and was so interested in missionary work that he was elected a member of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. He corresponded with the leading clergymen of the time, and became an advocate of sending an Anglican bishop to America.

Most interesting was his building of a church for the Mohawks at the Upper Castle (Canajoharie). Funds were raised and labor was contributed by the Indians. Then Sir William hired the carpenters and supplied a bell and a weathervane. The Indian Castle Church (though much altered) still stands as an evidence of this enterprise.

While Sir William strongly supported the official Anglican church, he was generous and friendly in support of others. Eleazar Wheelock, Samuel Kirkland, and Gideon Hawley were aided in their missions among the Indians. The Dutch Reformed Church was active in the area, and Lutherans even held services at the Johnson home. Roman Catholics, who were officially frowned upon, received a welcome at Johnstown, where many settled, and were allowed their own priest and chapel.

Failure of Indian Management

When the ministry rejected Sir William's plan for a centralized administration of Indian affairs, they restored the control of Indian trade to the several provincial governments. Sir William still had his regional deputies, and there were commissaries and interpreters at the principal posts, but he could not enforce regulations for trader's passes, fair prices, or the confinement of all trade to posts for stricter regulation. Traders, difficult to control at best, took advantage of the diversity of rules and the loosening of control by the colonial govern-

00044

ments. They welcomed any opportunity to expand trade or to venture into new areas.

This tendency was well illustrated by the episode of Major Robert Rogers at Michilimackinac. The renowned Ranger, hero of the Indian wars, had achieved a great reputation in England, where he had published an account of his adventures and a drama on the story of Pontiac. Ever ambitious and conceiving great plans for the American West, he obtained a commission as governor of Michilimackinac, one of the posts which had fallen in Pontiac's uprising. This he envisioned might be the seat of a great Western empire with himself at the head, and perhaps the staging ground for the "Northwest Passage." He drew up elaborate plans for its government and trade.

Rogers' appointment over the heads of the American authorities was a shock to Sir William and General Gage who knew something of the man's unstable character. They sought to circumscribe his activities to prevent his stirring up trouble. In Indian affairs, he was under Sir William who appointed a commissary to regulate the trade at the fort. Sir William also directed that all trade in the West should be confined to the posts, a regulation which hampered those traders who preferred to carry on their barter among the tribes. Rogers disregarded these regulations, ran up a considerable debt, and engaged in a brawl with the commissary. His violent behavior and grandiose plans aroused the suspicions of some subordinates who claimed that he was plotting treason and was in communication with the French. He was arrested, thrown in irons, and sent to Montreal for trial. There, however, he won the backing of Montreal traders who had loaned him money and who had ventured into his unauthorized trade. Witnesses against him were either driven to England or jailed on trumped up charges, and Rogers was acquitted.

It is not clear that Rogers was guilty of treason as he was charged, but that he was extravagant, reckless, and insubordinate there is no doubt. His grandiose plan for the West would have been a clear violation of the spirit of the Fort Stanwix treaty. Any such scheme might jeopardize the pacific Indian policies of Sir William. Rogers had little liking or sympathy for Indians and he chafed under all government regulation. He was a popular figure, who still has his admirers, but his ideas and plans were endangering the pacification of the frontier.

Considering the instability of the Indian tribes, their weakness and deteriorating condition, their rivalries, and their constant demands upon the government, it is doubtful whether any treaty-fixing boundaries could have had any lasting value. In periods of peace, white

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settlements expanded at an accelerated rate. The constant push westward was bound to encroach upon the Indians' tribal claims and to affect their mode of life. The frontier settler was an individualist, with little regard for laws, and impatient of all restraint. This westward march of settlement and the white man's civilization could hardly be opposed by colonial governments.

Rogers' illicit exploit, the attempt to carve an empire out of the Far West, could be checked. There were other plans, however, legal, and officially approved, and with the backing of influential men of the Colonies, which also tended to upset the equilibrium of frontier peace. By 1774, leading citizens of Virginia and Pennsylvania were forming companies to take over large areas in the West. Lobbyists were in England drawing plans and preparing measures which would give official sanction to developments far beyond the Fort Stanwix Line. Sir William knew of these plans; some of the leading speculators, like George Croghan, were his associates and correspondents; but he could do little to check their schemes. Neither could the colonial governments say anything to counter such plans, although they brought Virginia and Pennsylvania close to conflict.

A certain amount of white expansion would have been tolerated by the Indians, had there not been sporadic outbursts of violence. Some aggressive frontiersmen seemed bent on exterminating any Indians who stood in their way. Murders of Indians by white men on the frontier for no cause, and with no punishment for the crimes, were all too frequent. Those by Michael Cresap and William Greathouse—the slaying of the whole family of Chief Logan—were so wanton as to shock the civilized communities. It was more and more difficult to convince the Indians that the white settler was not his enemy. These and other difficulties brought constant pressure upon Sir William to convene another meeting to appease the Indians, to assuage their grief and to answer their complaints. These demands came when he would have preferred quietly to cultivate his farm, to promote his settlements and to enjoy his homes and family.

Sir William's health, first impaired by his wound in 1755 (the ball having never been removed), had suffered from his numerous journeys to the frontier and was undermined by various ailments. He had given up riding; he had sought the aid of various doctors and had tried numerous remedies. Since 1767, he had been going to the seashore in Connecticut or to Long Island, for months to recuperate. He had tried the waters of mineral springs. During these absences, he delegated his duties to Guy Johnson, his deputy, who had conducted several conferences. Yet so great was the Indians' dependence upon "War-

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raghiyagey," and so great was his influence over them, that he was again forced to convene a meeting of the Indians at Johnson Hall.

On July 11, 1774, the Chiefs of the Six Nations were continuing a conference with Sir William and his deputies, Guy Johnson and

Colonel Guy Johnson
Painting by Benjamin West.
Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.

Daniel Claus, concerned chiefly with complaints of white outrages on the frontier. Sir Wiliam, as was his custom, spoke long and earnestly, reviewing and condemning the murders by Cresap, the excesses of others, but also blaming the warlike Shawnees in the Ohio country. He told of steps he had taken to settle these troubles, and he called for the help of the Six Nations in restraining the others. It was the same difficult task of appeasing both sides and calling for moderation and the rule of reason. Sir William, however, was a sick man and he was tired. He had to be helped to the Hall where he collapsed. Within 2 hours, he died.

The sudden death of Sir William was in itself a crisis. The Indians who trusted and believed in him were shocked. They wanted to broadcast the news by runners to all their castles. Guy Johnson persuaded them to wait and to avoid a panic. He asked for their participation in the funeral and promised his own in the condolence ceremony. And for the continuity of the Indian negotiations, he promised to take care of their affairs.

Sir William had not been unmindful of the consequences of his illness and death, and some months before, displaying statesmanlike concern for his office, had made plans for a successor. His son and heir Sir John was consulted but showed no desire to shoulder his father's burdens. Daniel Claus was the senior deputy of long experience in Indian affairs and might have been a logical choice. But Guy Johnson had acted frequently in Sir William's absence, was familiar with negotiations, and had the advantage of the Johnson name. So Sir William declared his preference for Guy to General Gage and to Lord Dartmouth of the Colonial Office. Guy immediately took over and was recognized as the temporary superintendent. He very ably carried on the Indian policy of Sir William, until he was faced with new issues in the American Revolution.

American Independence

Within a year after Sir William's death came the outbreak of the American Revolution, which was to have a profound effect upon relations with the Indians. One can only conjecture what would have been the course of events had Sir William lived to witness the Revolution. Would he have sided with the American Colonies? Or would his great influence with the Indians have changed the course of New York's history? Certainly he would have been a power in the shaping of events of the time.

00048

Sir William was well informed concerning the issues of the day. He was supplied with the New York newspapers and other contemporary literature and he had a wide correspondence with merchants, officials, officers, and clergymen in New York, Philadelphia, and London. He was much concerned with the measures passed by Parliament which stirred opposition in the Colonies—the Stamp Act, the Tea Tax, and the Boston Port Bill. He realized the need for taxes, but he felt the ministry were not aware of the temper of the Colonies. A week before his death he wrote: "I am afraid the Parliament did not reflect when the Port Bill was passed, that every thing of late Years is carried here by Associations; & that if they have time they will form a Union which will Alarm the British Merchants & Manufacturers, & by setting them on the back of Government, render every Law that has the aspect of restraint Abortive."

While he understood the issues and the temper of the people, Sir William as a crown official deplored the resort to violence and opposed such groups as the "Sons of Liberty." He was frankly a monarchist and had no sympathy with "Republicans." For years he had been a member of the governor's council and had been interested in colonial politics. In Indian relations he had always been the advocate of reason, compromise, and accommodation. He believed that issues might be settled without resort to force. Had he lived and been compelled to make a decision, he would probably have remained loyal to the king, as were members of his family and many of their friends and associates. He would have found many others of his friends, tenants, and neighbors going along with the Revolutionary cause. He no doubt would have been chiefly concerned, however, with the effect of the struggle upon the Indians and would have noted that the troublesome pioneers of the frontier were likely to be on the side of rebellion, for Indian affairs were complicated by the struggle.

Indians and the Revolution

In all the colonial wars the Six Nations played an active part. They occupied a strategic area in the center of New York and they could help or hinder on routes of communication any major military campaigns. They could give valuable service as scouts and spies as well as military auxiliaries. Traditionally the Six Nations were allies of the British, and the Indian Department under Sir William strove to keep them "in the British interest." Hence Guy Johnson as Superintendent

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tried at this time to keep them friendly. The patriot leaders, knowing that the great authority of Sir William was now exercised by his successor, were suspicious and hoped to neutralize the Indians rather than to win them over. At first it appeared that was also the aim of Guy, for he told the Indians that this was a quarrel between "the Boston people" and the King's ministers. Indeed to the people of upper New York it did seem to be a localized affair and none of their business. But Samuel Kirkland, the New England missionary to the Oneidas, tried to explain to his charges the issues as he saw them. This seemed to Colonel Guy like outright incitement to rebellion and harsh letters were written between him and Kirkland. He continued to hold official conferences with the Indians.

When the militia of New York were called out to support the patriot cause they feared the consequences if the Indians were kept on the British side. A committee from Albany met the Indians at German Flatts and arranged another meeting in Albany with representatives from the Congress at Philadelphia. There they obtained from the Indians a promise of neutrality. But neutrality was just as difficult for the Indians as it was for civilians who had ties with both sides. At Albany, Chief Abraham had told the Committee of the Indians' high regard for Sir William's son and heir, Sir John, and that he should not be molested. They also trusted Colonel Guy, who continued officially to dispense gifts and supplies. If the Johnsons were interfered with the Indians would be offended.

Early moves of the patriot leaders in New York were regarded by Guy Johnson as a threat to his authority. He believed that efforts would be made to arrest him and to control the Indians through his office. He decided to leave the Mohawk Valley and to hold an Indian Congress at Fort Ontario, Oswego. There he still urged Indian neutrality, but the Caghnawagas of Canada were definitely on the British side, and he could not control the western tribes. He decided to go down the St. Lawrence to Montreal with his officers of the Indian service and others who were with him. There he reported to General Carleton, and his officers and Indians joined the British forces. Soon they were engaged in skirmishes on Lake Champlain and at St. Johns and Montreal.

Back in the valley Sir John, who was not a crown official, declared his loyalty to the King, but gave his promise not to take part in the struggle. Johnson Hall was kept under surveillance by the militia, and when it seemed that Sir John was arming his loyalist followers, steps were taken to seize him. Having spent 2 years in England, Sir John was more British than his father. He was a man of spirit and

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keenly resented the restraints thrown about him. He organized his faithful tenants as a protection for his property. When he learned that the provincials with a force under General Schuyler were coming to the Hall, he decided to flee. In May 1776 with a party of 200, Sir John fled through the Adirondacks to Montreal. Suffering much privation since they had little time to prepare or equip themselves, the small party joined the exiles who had preceded them. Subsequently they were organized as Loyalist Rangers fighting for the British. Johnson Hall was seized and plundered, and Sir John's pregnant wife, Lady Johnson, was carried as a hostage to Albany.

The flight of the Johnsons was a great blow to the security of the Mohawk Valley. With them went many of their loyalist retainers, tenants, and officers of the Indian service. They were also accompanied by influential Indian leaders, of whom Joseph Brant was the most important. A protege of Sir William, Joseph had become an interpreter and secretary for Colonel Guy after Sir William's death. He was the brother of Sir William's housekeeper, Molly Brant. When Guy decided to go to England, to confirm his position as Indian superintendent, Brant went with the party. He became very popular in London; he was feted and had his portrait painted by leading artists; he finally came back to New York, with a captain's commission in the British army. Upon returning to America, Joseph Brant began enlisting the Indians for the British forces.

In the Mohawk Valley, in the meantime, the Revolutionary Tryon County Committee forced wavering neutrals to take the oath of allegiance. The Indians who were personally attached to the Johnsons and other Tories were disaffected. Many fled to Canada with the Reverend John Stuart, the missionary at Fort Hunter. Those who remained, according to Colonel Tench Tilghman, who visited the valley with the Commissioners from Congress, were much influenced by Molly Brant, the relict of Sir William. Only the Oneidas and Tuscaroras, due to the work of Samuel Kirkland, remained friendly to the patriot cause.

During the Burgoyne campaign in 1777, the Mohawk Valley was the object of the expedition of Barry St. Leger, who was accompanied by Sir John Johnson and his Tory Rangers and by Indians under Joseph Brant. When the militia went to the relief of Fort Stanwix, Molly Brant informed the British of their movements. At Oriskany, Tories and Indians were engaged in bloody combat with their former neighbors. After this Molly Brant fled to the Indian country where she lived for awhile; then joined British garrisons, first at Fort Niagara, and later on Carleton Island. She was influential in controlling the

00051

Indians for the British. From Niagara and from the North, Tory and Indian raids devastated the Mohawk valley. The massacres at Cherry Valley and Wyoming alerted the country to the dangers of frontier warfare. Finally, General Washington planned a war of extermination against the Iroquois of central and western New York. The campaigns of Clinton and Sullivan in 1779 were directed at the Indians; Seneca towns were destroyed, crops were burned, and most of the tribes fled to refuge in Canada. So successful was this expedition that

Joseph Brant
Painting by Gilbert Stuart.
Courtesy of New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, N. Y.

most of the Indians left New York. They settled on lands provided for them by the British on the Bay of Quinte and at Brantford, Ontario. Their lands in New York were confiscated. The relocation of the Indians was a principal result of the Revolutionary War. That the Indians played such a prominent role in the conflict and that they were so strongly attached to the British was undoubtedly due to the great influence exerted over them by Sir William Johnson.

Importance of Sir William Johnson

The history of New York was profoundly influenced in the Colonial and Revolutionary periods by the Iroquois Indians of the Six Nations. They in turn were so successfully managed, directed, and even controlled by Sir William Johnson that he became one of the greatest New Yorkers of his day. His greatness is more remarkable because he gained his power over the Indians through his honesty, fairness, and brotherly love shown in dealing with them. And he used his power for honest aims and for the good of the Indians as well as for the whites. He was a diplomat and peacemaker. His material success as merchant, land developer, and empire builder served only to reinforce and strengthen his position. The frontier was open for development and many sought to carve out spheres of influence and to build a fortune in land. By his moderation, tact, and good sense, Sir William was able to conserve and consolidate his gains both materially and in his relations with other men. A wide acquaintance and correspondence won for him fame and reputation. He was universally trusted. He was content to wield his influence without show of personal ambition or political preferment. His passing left a vacuum, for no one was able to gain such a breadth of influence. It was unfortunate that the course of war and revolution wrecked so much that he had built. Patriotic historians have done him less than justice, due to the unpopularity of his successors. Now his contributions and his good example are better understood.

The role of the Indians in New York history also has been too little appreciated. During the Revolution they sided with the British, their lands were confiscated, and many of them fled to Canada with the Tories. This brought them a kind of stigma in American history and they received little sympathy. Yet they were original New Yorkers and their achievements and destiny need to be studied as a part of our history along with the story of Sir William Johnson.

00053

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00054

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00055